

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE D.C. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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State Superintendent Briggs
Board President and Members

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the state accountability workbook.

I will address two points:

- Reporting Graduation Data
- Validity of Data Reported from STARS (DCPS) to SLED (OSSE)

You may recall that I reported the practice of altered student academic records at Woodrow Wilson HS in 2002 and almost half of the 2006 senior class improperly represented or certified as having satisfied mandatory graduation requirements.

The 2003 report of contractor Gardiner Kanya and Associates confirmed my reports and found transcripts and supporting records in disarray in every high school with the likelihood of tampering that could not be confirmed. Likewise, the April 2007 report of the DC Inspector General confirmed my reports. **The most important finding of both reports was that all alterations were in-house by those with authorized records access.**

Altered records allowed students to graduate without having completed requirements that one expects of high school students. In the last two years, student records have been reportedly cleaned up and students listed for graduation have reportedly met all graduation requirements.

The problem of ineligible graduates has not ended, it's just been shifted to a new loophole: **Credit Recovery and Summer School.** Students can earn credits in courses for less work and much less learning and far less mastery of course standards. Students are shortchanged, while adults claim progress.

Although DC OSSE cannot require DCPS to plug these loopholes, it can report them. I am recommending that the high school graduation numbers be broken down to those who graduate with credits earned in the high school day programs with a separate listing of those who graduate with Credit Recovery courses and summer school courses. You would be doing a great service for honest reporting of actual achievement data. Last year well over 1000 high school students, many of them seniors, needed these watered-down courses in order to receive a diploma. Just imagine, how more seriously students would take high school, if they knew that these short-cuts were no longer available.

My second recommendation concerns the fact that STARS does not display on report cards and transcripts courses that students took and then transferred out when they were failing. This enables schools to inflate students' grade point averages, very often so they can appear to qualify for sports. The SLED should ensure that the complete academic history remains intact.

Let's hold everyone accountable, not just teachers.
Thank you.